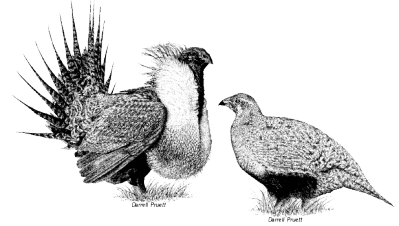


Final Meeting Summary



Date: January 15 and 16, 2008

Meeting: Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee

Location: Boise, Idaho (Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game on 15th, Doubletree Club on 16th)

January 15, 2008

In attendance (some or all of the meeting) on January 15, 2008:

Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG), Lynn Burtenshaw (Upper Snake LWG), Mark Collinge (United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services), Jack Depperschmitt (Department of Energy – Idaho), Brett Dumas (Idaho Power), Frank Fink (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Nate Fisher (Office of Species Conservation), Steve Goddard (Idaho Wildlife Federation, Ada County Fish and Game League), Dan Gossett (Shoshone-Paiute Tribes), Gene Gray (West Central LWG), Wendy Green (West Central LWG), Vincent Guyer (Challis LWG), Tom Hemker (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Joe Hinson (Northwest Natural Resources Group), Betsy Holmes (Department of Energy – Idaho), Rich Howard (Idaho Conservation League), Ron Kay (Idaho State Department of Agriculture), Angela Lafferty (Idaho Department of Lands), Paul Makela (BLM Idaho State Office), Rob Mickelsen (U.S. Forest Service), Ann Moser (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Dallan Nalder (Curlew LWG), Bill Platts (Citizen), Mike Remming (Jarbidge LWG), John Romero (Idaho Cattle Association), Alan Sands (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), David Skinner (Sawtooth National Forest, North Magic Valley LWG), Alison Squier (Ziji Creative Resources Inc.), Kendra Womack (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Rich Yankey (Shoshone Basin LWG).

Introductions and Review Agenda

All participants introduced themselves and Alison reviewed the agenda and asked participants if there were any additional agenda items or changes to the agenda that should be considered. There were no suggested revisions or additions to the agenda.

2008 Ground Rules:

- Have a sense of humor
- No bomb throwing

- No personal attacks
- Cell phones off
- No talking out of turn
- Be open minded and willing to compromise
- Raise hand to speak and be recognized

Miscellaneous SAC Business

Approve Meeting Summary from Previous SAC Meeting

Alison reported that she'd received comments and/or corrections from about six people on the November meeting notes. All of the recommended changes were incorporated into revised notes. The SAC members approved and adopted the November 2, 2007 SAC meeting summary notes.

State and Regional Updates

Tom Hemker provided an update on the status of the Western Watersheds Project v. USFWS lawsuit. He said there is a meeting in Reno Nevada in three weeks for the western states to talk together.

Tom also reported that the efforts to reseed the Murphy Complex Fire were ongoing. Lots of seed is already on the ground and there is a contract in place to start putting sagebrush on the ground. The Office of Species Conservation (OSC) was able to secure other funding for the Murphy Complex groundwork so that funding that had been originally identified to fund projects is available again. Tom explained that he wanted to review the original approved project lists again the second day of the meeting in order to determine if there have been any changes to the proposed projects and/or changes to the original funding requests.

Tom reported that Congress has allocated \$250,000 for Idaho sage-grouse conservation for 2008.

Local Working Group and Other Updates

The SAC members and other meeting attendees provided the following updates:

- **Mike Remming** (Jarbidge LWG) – Group participants have written letters of endorsement for the LWG plan. However, the plan hasn't been updated since the fires. They hope to meet again in February if they are able to secure a facilitator for the meeting.
- **Rich Yankee** (Shoshone LWG) – They secured HIP funding to do an enclosure project that he mentioned at the November meeting. The LWG has not met officially this year. They need to secure a facilitator to get back together again (their facilitator was reassigned). They are very close to having their plan completed.
- **Ron Kay** (ISDA) – The ISDA tries to attend most of the LWG meetings. They have been very involved in the Governor's group working on the Murphy Complex fire.
- **Rob Mickelsen** (U.S. Forest Service) – The Curlew Grazing Association, Western Watersheds Project, and others developed a panel to work on developing population objectives for the Curlew Valley. The

USFS has collected sagebrush seed and sent it to Lucky Peak to grow for the Curlew LWG project – plan on planting next year.

- **Lynn Burtenshaw** (Upper Snake LWG) – The Upper Snake LWG Executive Committee has been working to bring the LWG plan into compliance with the state plan. Jim Hagenbarth will no longer be the representative on the SAC since he is starting up a similar LWG planning effort in Montana. The project on the Camus Wildlife Refuge is moving forward.
- **Steve Goddard** (IWF, ICFG) – Working on expanding an enclosure on Dry Creek.
- **Gene Gray** (West Central LWG) – Everyone is invited to the next West Central meeting on January 31 at the VFW Hall at Midvale. Gene said he is completing fieldwork notes from 2007. The LWG has asked the agencies to informally review the draft CCA. They hope to have the final submitted to FWS in February.
- **Donna Bennett** (Owyhee LWG) – The group met in December to talk about the lawsuit. Put project proposals on hold until the 2007 funding issue is resolved. The juniper mastication project is very important to the group and they look forward to seeing the proposal be implemented. Their next meeting is Wednesday, January 23rd. They've changed the meeting site to the museum. The group is also getting a spot to post sage-grouse information on the Owyhee County web site.
- **Dan Gossett** (Shoshone-Paiute Tribes) – Worked with Tribal members to collect sagebrush seed – 12 tribal members and 13 staff members participated. Lucky Peak will have all of that seed by the end of the week. Even got their Director out collecting seeds. Yakima Tribe has been asking for birds to transplant; no formal proposal has been put forward yet. Dan also reported that power line (CJ Strike to Duck Valley) construction is underway on the reservation and that so far, they are doing a good job dragging cheat grass around.
- **Paul Makela** (BLM) – Paul Makela (BLM) – Field offices are updating the Idaho Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map with the 2007 wildfire and vegetation treatment information. The updates should be done by the end of the week and a final map ready for distribution about March 1. Paul has been working with Joe Hinson, Eva Strand (Univ. Idaho) and others on development of a photographic guide to sage-grouse habitat for landowners. The completed guide should also be helpful to agency folks who are new to the state. The idea is to have a visual guide as to what suitable, marginal, and unsuitable habitat looks like, across various plant communities and season (e.g. breeding, winter etc.). Comments on the Westside programmatic EIS for the energy corridor are due soon. The funding for 2008 for the Healthy Lands Initiative has been reduced. The original target was \$1.8 million for the southern Snake River area and \$1.9 for the tri state area. It appears the final allocation will be about one-third of that or \$580,000 the Southern Idaho Snake River Plain HLI area, and \$200,000 for the Idaho portion of the tri state area.
- **Vince Guyer** (Challis LWG) – The LWG met in December to prepare their annual report. They also worked on identifying priority areas within the planning area. They will be working on a write up of priority areas in early April. They are ready to move forward on projects for NEPA and funding.
- **Dallan Nalder** (Curlew LWG) – Dallan reported that ½ of the land within the Curlew LWG planning area has burned in the last two years. This has created some concerns about predator problems. They are going to request a weather station in the area to track changing conditions. Would also like to develop coordination/communication with Utah LWG to see what they are doing.

- **Rich Howard** (ICL) – Rich expressed his appreciation for the great work that David Smith and others did in convening the state workshop in November. He noted the value of the information exchange and dialog. ICL's annual retreat will be May 16-18 he is looking forward to having Tom Hemker come and give a presentation.
- **David Skinner** (Sawtooth NF, North Magic Valley LWG) – David explained that he is not one of the nominees for the North Magic Valley LWG but that he hoped to continue to attend SAC meetings as an observer. He explained that the LWG wanted to have their regular representative not be an agency person if possible. He said the progress on developing the group's plan had been somewhat slow since the group has been focusing on responding to other issues including the Friedman Memorial Airport expansion and power line proposals. He noted that the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts is meeting this month and wants more information on sage-grouse. He suggested it might be a good idea for Nate Fisher or Tom Hemker to talk with them.
- **Joe Hinson** (Northwest Natural Resources Group) – Joe said he'd been fortunate to have an opportunity to work with folks at the University of Idaho to develop an illustrated guide to sage-grouse habitat management. The guide will include information on grazing that could enhance or improve habitat. The project is proceeding quickly and the guide could be completed within the year. (Dan Gossett told Joe that he's got lots of photos of forbs.)
- **Brett Dumas** (Idaho Power) – Brett said he'd wait until his presentation the next day.
- **Jack Depperschmidt** (DOE-ID) – About a year ago the DOE proposed a test range on INL to support testing of vulnerability assessment on nuclear facilities. DOE proposed a small 450 radius area to conduct testing of RPGs on a variety of barriers used to protect facilities. In the testing they will be using a range of explosives. Approximately 90% of the tests will be in a range below 10 pounds of explosives, about 10% will be larger at about 1,000 pounds (about three times every 10 years), there will also be tests using approximately 10,000 pounds of explosives about 2 times every 10 years. DOE developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) and has agreed to follow the state sage-grouse guidelines to the extent possible to mitigate impacts from testing. They have received, reviewed and responded to about 32 comments on the EA. They moved the initial proposed site out of the sagebrush and into a previously burned area. (Tom Hemker suggested that in doing the outreach for the EA, DOE should have consulted with the affected LWGs.) Following is a web link to the Environmental Assessment for the National Security Test Range-- www.id.doe.gov. Proceed to the link and then click on "Laboratory Programs." If any SAC member or other would like to be on the DOE-ID NEPA mailing list, please send Jack your name and address and he will ensure you get on the list.
- **Betsy Holmes** (DOE-ID) – She explained that they have started working on a plan to mitigate for sensitive species on INL. They have collected Masters and PhD theses to try to identify major considerations. They are doing sitewide surveys of sage-grouse and pygmy rabbits. Betsy provided the following link to the Idaho National Laboratory Conservation Management Plan/CCA - www.stoller-ESER.com
- **Frank Fink** (NRCS) – There are still lots of rumors on the contents of the new Farm Bill but no certainty yet. Until the Farm Bill is signed there is an omnibus bill that will extend the 2007 Farm Bill to March 2008. The omnibus bill will contain an extension of the Wildland Habitat Incentive Program, the Farm and Ranchland Project Program, and the EQUIP Farm Program. Assuming its signed there will be

funding coming soon; those funds will have to be obligated by March 15, 2008. NRCS has put aside about \$1 million for species of special concern under the EQUIP program. They need help identifying projects and people to implement them.

- **Angela Lafferty** (IDL) – Angela Lafferty introduced herself as the replacement for Tracy Behrens.
- **Ann Moser** (IDFG) – Tom and Ann met with the IDFG web site folks to talk about updating the site so that more information will be available (e.g., SAC notes, agendas, LWG materials, etc. They've also informally decided to have the SAC newsletter come out quarterly, after each SAC meeting since the LWG updates are an important component of the newsletter. Please send Ann ideas for the newsletter and suggestions for the web site too.
- **Alan Sands** (IDFG, TNC) – The good news is that restoration work is booming – the amount of work being done and the level of cooperation are unprecedented. In addition to the work being done on the Murphy Complex Fire there are plans in place to restore IDL lands too. The bad news is that the need for restoration work is booming.
- **Lisa Petersen** (OER) – Lisa introduced herself and explained that the Idaho Office of Environmental Resources' role is to facilitate all stakeholders in discussion about natural resources. She invited a representative from the SAC to contact her office and attend meetings.

Presentation and Discussion: Next Steps for Sage-grouse in Idaho...The Governor's Strategy for Implementing the State Plan

Nate Fisher, the Administrator of the Office of Species Conservation (OSC) attended both days of the SAC meetings and gave an update to the group on the Governor's strategy. He thanked the SAC members for their service and all their hard work. He commented that back in November the OSC kind of marched in to talk to the group knowing that something was coming and that they wanted to let folks know – but that they didn't know exactly what that might look like.

Nate's presentation was titled, "Next Steps for Sage Grouse In Idaho...The Governor's strategy for implementing the state plan locally." He began by summarizing some of what the Judge said in the decision:

- FWS "Findings": "federal and state agencies had no plans in place to protect habitat"...FWS concluded that it "is not aware of any State regulations that conserve greater sage-grouse habitat or encourage habitat conservation efforts on private lands."
- "Evaluating over 300 plans from state and federal agencies, among others, the FWS determined that only 20 met PECE standards"
- "The FWS's failure to coherently consider the adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms renders its decision arbitrary and capricious"

Nate explained that from the Governor's perspective what is needed is:

- Updates of conservation actions completed in the last 5 years;
- Updates of population and habitat status;
- Identification of "important" areas (e.g., areas with strong habitat values and numbers, areas where threats are largest, and areas where there is a strong potential for habitat restoration); and

- Implementation plans for each LWG and statewide including timetable, budgets, and accountability.

Nate also talked about the importance of developing an inventory of areas where habitat is good and just needs to be maintained, summarizing remaining threats, committing to implement actions adequate to meet those threats, implementing those conservation actions, and monitoring outcomes. He explained that in developing the materials identified above it would also be possible in some places to develop: CCAAs to provide “incidental take”, “no surprises” assurances on private lands; and CCAs coupled with conferencing to help remove uncertainties on public lands. Ultimately, all these efforts together may create the possibility of a “not warranted” decision by the USFWS.

Nate suggested that all LWGs provide their annual reports and any other commitments they can, that the SAC subcommittee compile and add statewide actions to the extent possible. He also referred to a SAC review of some type of draft document (i.e., statewide actions) in April and talked about having the SAC help revise that document as necessary. The Governor would then submit this completed document to USFWS.

Next, Joe Hinson of Northwest Natural Resources Group gave a presentation on some possible tools that LWGs might use to provide additional information to better describes current conditions and threats. Joe explained that he is working for OSC to help develop tools and responses to address concerns about sage-grouse and their habitats in Idaho. He used as an example some specific elements of the West Central proposal. He also talked about the West Central LWGs CCA proposal.

In the West Central proposal landowners enroll, adopt conservation measures, and get Sec. 10 assurances. For the BLM lands where landowner has grazing permits, the BLM would review and can incorporate applicable practices in either AOIs or through allotment revisions (this may require a CCA). The BLM/FWS would then “conference” as though species were listed at that time. The FWS would provide written notice to landowner/permittee that documents any shortcomings, with opportunity to correct practices or drop the CCAA.

Joe presented the SAC with a series of maps including: a shape file of LWG planning area with key habitat, landownership, BLM grazing allotments, vegetative covers, shrub density, sage productivity, soil productivity, greenness, fire history, sage-grouse leks, telemetry – then combinations/layering of sage-grouse leks plus shrub density, sage-grouse leks plus shrub density plus grazing allotments, leks with 2-mile buffer and well sites plus land ownership plus annual grasslands, etc. He stated that OSC would be willing and able to help LWGs by providing the maps at the request of the LWGs. Other information that’s available includes: any local threats from power lines, roads, development, differences with historic range of variability for the planning area or large portions of it, key areas for restoration, recent fires, and aerial photography.

He talked about the importance of using this additional data to identify areas where threats are greatest, identify areas where opportunities for success are the best, show where existing habitat meets rangeland health and sage-grouse standards, where possible to take some areas “off the table,” and to set priorities.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned for the day at 5:00 pm. Alison reminded participants to meet at the Doubletree Club at 9:00 am on January 16, 2008.

January 16, 2008

In attendance (some or all of the meeting) on January 16, 2008:

Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG), Lynn Burtenshaw (Upper Snake LWG), Mark Collinge (United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services), Jack Depperschmitt (Department of Energy – Idaho), Brett Dumas (Idaho Power), Frank Fink (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Nate Fisher (Office of Species Conservation), Steve Goddard (Idaho Wildlife Federation, Ada County Fish and Game League), Dan Gossett (Shoshone-Paiute Tribes), Gene Gray (West Central LWG), Wendy Green (West Central LWG), Vincent Guyer (Challis LWG), Tom Hemker (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Joe Hinson (Northwest Natural Resources Group), Betsy Holmes (Department of Energy – Idaho), Rich Howard (Idaho Conservation League), Ron Kay (Idaho State Department of Agriculture), Angela Lafferty (Idaho Department of Lands), Paul Makela (BLM Idaho State Office), Rob Mickelsen (U.S. Forest Service), Ann Moser (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Dallan Nalder (Curlew LWG), Lisa Petersen (Office of Environmental Resources), Bill Platts (Citizen), Mike Remming (Jarbidge LWG), John Romero (Idaho Cattle Association), Alan Sands (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), Gregg Servheen (Idaho Department of Fish and Game), David Skinner (Sawtooth National Forest, North Magic Valley LWG), Alison Squier (Ziji Creative Resources Inc.), Kendra Womack (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Rich Yankey (Shoshone Basin LWG).

SAC Technical Advisory Committee Update

Ann Moser the Chair of the SAC Technical Advisory Committee (TAT) gave an update on the committee's progress and on the status of the LWG annual reports for 2007. Ann reported that she's received reports from all but 3 LWGs at this point and the reports include lots of detailed information. Ann said that she's also sent specific project sponsors another form seeking input on how to better track habitat projects and asking some specific questions about completed habitat projects in order to get a better feel for what has been done.

SAC TAT committee members include: Ann Moser, Paul Makela, Rob Mickelsen, Ron Kay, Brett Dumas, Angela Lafferty, Frank Fink, Kendra Womack, Alan Sands, and Tom Hemker. The SAC TAT was established at the direction of the SAC per specific language in the state plan; the identified purpose of the SAC TAT is to facilitate the characterization, tracking and reporting of general status and trends in sage-grouse habitat characteristics and populations statewide. Some of the specific tasks assigned to the SAC TAT in the state plan included:

- Develop and disseminate a template for LWG annual accomplishment reports. Establish a database and/or spreadsheet to summarize habitat accomplishments from LWG annual reports, and habitat

accomplishments from other agency and private projects. Also develop a format for producing a summary suitable for a statewide progress report.

- Serve as an information conduit between LWGs, SAC, and agencies, to provide habitat and population data as needed, and to ensure that information needed for annual updates to the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map and related reports is acquired in a timely manner. Note: site-specific fine-scale data will be maintained by the individual agencies.
- Review adequacy of 2005 USGS Shrubmap or other vegetation map products to help refine or replace the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map.
- Coordinate with USGS, Universities and other appropriate partners in further evaluating landscape and habitat fragmentation at multiple scales. Since technology and analytical approaches are anticipated to change, and since approaches to quantifying or modeling fragmentation vary depending on the metric, specific methods or software are not prescribed here.

At their committee meeting the SAC TAT discussed updates to the habitat planning map; at present March 1 is the anticipated date for updates. Ann noted that an additional task outlined in the state plan was to facilitate mapping of sage-grouse seasonal habitats; the SAC TAT is looking at an approach that will probably involve expert review (e.g., regional IDFG staff) followed by discussion and ground truthing at the LWG level. They are also talked about mapping and monitoring of field projects. They talked about developing a guide to provide better guidance regarding measurement and monitoring.

Paul Makela noted that improvement could be made in the dissemination of the habitat map once it has been updated. Currently, the state office posts it on the U. of Idaho centralized database. Alison suggested that once the sage-grouse portion of the IDFG web site has been made a little more users friendly, a link could be added to direct interested parties to the U. of Idaho database.

Steve Goddard noted that in initial discussion of SAC TAT activities when the plan was being written, the group had talked about the SAC TAT working on development of a standardized mapping methodology. Paul responded that the direction had been that the SAC TAT would consider the BLM Framework when that effort was complete. Paul noted that the national team is building on the initial Idaho process and that the national document is out for review but is not yet complete.

Rob Mickelsen added that the SAC TAT agreed to write up a proposal for more specific criteria to use by the funding committee in review of projects. After some discussion the SAC members and SAC TAT agreed that the SAC TAT would develop these additional criteria recommendations prior to the SAC meeting in April 2008. The full SAC will review the recommendations at the April 2008 meeting.

Informational Presentation: Transmission lines and updates on recent research on effectiveness of perch deterrents on power line structures

Brett Dumas, with Idaho Power, gave three presentations: the first dealt with two high voltage power line projects in Idaho including the Hemingway Substation and Gateway West, the second was an overview of

the West-wide Energy Corridor Draft PEIS, and the third (presented on behalf of Jim Burruss with Rocky Mtn. Power) provided a summary of the findings of a Utah State University study on titled, "Effect of Perch Discouragers on Raptor and Corvid Use of Electric Utility Structures."

Brett extended apologies on behalf of Jim Burruss who had planned to attend and present the Perch Discouragers research, but who was unable to attend due to a family medical emergency.

High Voltage Power Line Projects

Brett began by talking about the Hemingway Substation. The proposed location is in northern Owyhee County, south of the Snake River about two miles west of the Idaho 45 and 78 highway junction. The substation is part of the Treasure Valley Electric Plan, which was developed through a community-based process and is intended to get more electricity into the Treasure Valley to accommodate maximum residential build out. It includes 230-kV lines to the Bowmont substation in southern Canyon County.

Last year in July Idaho Power hit its energy generating capacity on 17 days. If capacity is exceeded the company would have to start rolling brown outs which no one wants to see. The Gateway West project will help address this capacity issues. Gateway West is an Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power project that involves 650 miles of high voltage lines (500 kV, 345 kV, 230 kV). The purpose is to meet the growing demand for electricity. The power companies have an obligation to plan and construct transmission facilities to meet needs. Gateway West will move over 3000 MW power to Idaho and Utah, improve reliability of electric system and relieve congestion, and accommodate renewable energy (wind).

The schedule for Gateway West includes permitting 2008 – 2010, and construction in 2010 – 2012. The lead agency for the process will be the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service will be a cooperating agency. As required under NEPA, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be completed for the project. A third party contractor, Tetra Tech has been hired to complete the EIS. The process will include public involvement meetings, participation by federal, state, local governmental agencies, landowners, and interested members of the public and groups. The NEPA public meetings will start in April. Beginning in February both companies will start contacting state and local government regarding permitting. The EIS will include siting and alternative development, environmental analysis, and compilation and consideration of public comments.

Another power line project is a 500 kV line from Boardman area of NE Oregon to Hemingway. The primary purpose is to import power from the Northwest. A secondary purpose is to increase electricity export potential. This project will follow a process similar to the one described for Gateway West.

Brett also talked a little about customer requests for power. He explained that when a customer makes a request for a connection to electric power Idaho Power is mandated to respond and provide power to the meter. In doing so, they assess the most cost efficient way to meet customer request then they build it and charge the customer.

Energy Policy Act - West-Wide Energy Corridor

Brett also gave a presentation on the Energy Policy Act, West-wide energy corridor. The lead agencies on the project are the U.S. Department of Energy and the BLM. Cooperating federal agencies include the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; the U.S. Department of Defense; and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service.

The corridor locations are being identified in order to meet the West's needs to transmit energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed. The preliminary idea was to define energy production areas (e.g., oil, gas, coal, wind, solar, geothermal), define areas of need, ask industry/others for transport route proposals, and then map that data in GIS.

For the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) the lead agencies have developed a 3-Step process to identify draft corridor locations.

Step 1 identified "unrestricted" conceptual network of potential long-distance energy transport paths to connect energy supply areas with demand centers. In this step the most efficient transport paths were identified without regard to land ownership and environmental and regulatory issues. This step did consider industry and other proposals (many of these were siting proposal and were not components of an enhanced national grid).

Next, in step 2, the agencies looked at a modified corridor network that screened to avoid major known environmental, land use, and public concerns and regulatory constraints including; wilderness and wilderness study areas; military test and training areas; national parks, monuments, and wildlife refuges; tribal, state, and private lands; and other important known natural and cultural resources.

Finally, in step 3 the proposed energy corridors were further refined using corridor-specific input from local federal land management staff. This input included: avoiding locally important or sensitive local resources, and ensuring consistency with resource management objectives described in each federal unit's land use plans. This is an ongoing, iterative process with continued input into GIS.

There is a public meeting in Boise January 31, 2008 - from 2-5 PM and 6-8 PM at the Best Western Vista Inn. All comments on the Draft Programmatic EIS should be postmarked by February 14, 2008.

Additional information about the project can be found at: <http://corridoreis.anl.gov>.

Effect of Perch Discouragers on Raptor and Corvid Use of Electric Utility Structures

Jim Burruss of Rocky Mountain Power had hoped to come and give a presentation on Utah State University's research on Perch Deterrents. Jim has been actively involved in this research for a long time. However, he was unable to attend and asked Brett Dumas to present the research summary on his behalf.

Brett apologized that he was not familiar with some of the details regarding the study and indicated that Jim Burruss would be happy to come and talk with the group at some point in the future.

In 2007, between January 29 and April 27, 56 survey days and 112 surveys (morning and afternoon surveys) were completed. The study area was line driven during surveys and birds were observed within ¼ mile area on poles, ground, trees, fence, flying, etc. In addition, the line was walked once per week and prey remains and pellets were collected. There was documented evidence of sage-grouse activity.

The line included a control and 5 treatments consisting of: spikes, cones, triangles, and two different treatments using fireflies.

The 2007 results showed no significant difference in bird use of control vs. treatment poles. Brett noted that there were mechanical failures associated with the fireflies including bent or detached L-brackets, detached swivels, and broken firefly diverters. During the study period there was no sage-grouse predation documented. The only sage-grouse sighting was a bird found dead on road on January 31, and the cause of death is unknown. Approximately 85 pellets were collected; most appear to be rabbits. A high numbers of jackrabbits and cottontails observed during surveys.

The University of Utah also conducted 2008 surveys in January through April.

Review and Discussion: Status of Previously Approved Projects Recommended for OSC Disbursed USFWS Funding

Tom explained that the USFWS sage-grouse funding that is administered through OSC will be used to fund the SAC approved projects since an alternative funding source was found to cover the costs of rehabilitation on IDL lands burned as a result of the Murphy Complex Fires. Tom led the SAC through a review of the list of projects that were approved for funding by the SAC in July 2007. He asked participants to let him know if there had been any changes to the projects or funding sources since that time.

Following is a brief summary of major points raised:

- **Fire Break for the Curlew National Grasslands** – Met with the organizations that originally had problems with the project and explained the project in detail. They are now okay with the project.
- **Sage-grouse Study and Lek Surveys in the West Central Planning Area** – Still need the funding. Good to go forward. Do have additional USFWS challenge cost share funds.
- **Owyhee County Sage-grouse Telemetry Study to Determine WNV Impacts** – Tom said the USFWS has some funds available to help defray costs. No change from original proposal.
- **Curlew Valley Telemetry** – Need to talk with the BLM to secure cost share \$. Still request full amount of recommended funding.

- **Juniper Control on Ranch Land in Owyhee County** – NRCS \$250,000 integrative grants (Kent Morrison). Group is very excited about this project and wants to move forward. Still request full amount of recommended funding.
- **Camas NWR Habitat Restoration** – They have since found some other funding sources so total request to the SAC may come in a little lower than initially thought. Tom will check to see.
- **Thousand Springs Ranch Habitat Restoration** – No Change.
- **Magpie and Larkspur Exclosures** – On track, no change.
- **Leadville Allotment Rehabilitation** – They are off a year with other cost share funding. Will need the \$ in 2009 not 2008. Tentatively defer funding.
- **Planting Sagebrush Seedlings in the West Strong Field/Pasture, Curlew National Grassland** – No change, project on track. Seeds are currently at Lucky Peak, plan to plant fall 2008.
- **Cottonwood Pasture Habitat Improvement Fence** – On track, will go in next summer.
- **Camas County Fence Marking** – Tom Hemker said that IDFG may have a graduate student who will be doing a similar project that might include better monitoring and more fences. He'd like to consider replacing this project. The group had some discussion about whether this was acceptable to the sponsor. Tom will follow-up with the project sponsor to discuss options. For the present the project remains on the approved SAC list.
- **Sage-grouse West Nile Virus Monitoring on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation** – In July when the original project list was ranked this project ranked near the top of the list, but Dan Gossett agreed to defer the request for funding pending identification of additional funding sources. Dan requested that the group put their request for \$17,793 back on the list of approved projects. Participants agreed to do so since there will be an additional \$25,000 available because of the deferred funding request for the Leadville Allotment Rehabilitation.

Tom will take the SAC approved list back to Director Groen and Administrator Fisher for final approval. Alison suggested that the funding subcommittee consider a possible additional responsibility of working to facilitate identification of potential cost share for project proponents. John Romero, the subcommittee chair agreed that was a good idea but worried about the available time of the subcommittee. He noted the need for a full time dedicated person to deal with a range of SAC related sage-grouse needs, issues, and responsibilities.

John Romero also asked for some time at this point to express a concern about how the 2007 funding approval process was handled. He noted that the Congressional appropriation to fund the sage-grouse conservation actions was originally brought about through the efforts of ICA. He suggested that the SAC should have control of the funding not the state Directors. He asked the group to consider how the group can prevent what happened last year (i.e., funds being held after the SAC had approved a list of projects for potential use to fund the Murphy Complex Fire restoration work) from happening again in the future. He suggested that maybe the appropriation language should be changed to say that the SAC is responsible for allocating the funds.

Rich Howard pointed out that ultimately the state found other funds for the Murphy Complex Fire rehabilitation work and that from his point of view they heard the SAC's concerns back in November and responded by not using the USFWS funds for the Murphy Complex work. However, he agreed that John had a good point.

After some discussion about other options including development of an MOU between OSC and USFWS regarding allocation of the funding, Congressional appropriation language, etc.; the group agreed that the SAC funding subcommittee will work with the OSC Administrator and IDFG Director to explore development of language (MOU or other?) to clarify the role of the SAC in the recommendation/approval of USFWS sage-grouse funding dispersed through OSC (John Romero lead).

SAC Participation: Nominations for Reappointment and New Appointments

Tom Hemker briefly reviewed the history of the SAC membership and nomination process and thanked those individuals who had served far beyond their initial two-year term. He explained that he has asked for nominations from all the LWGs for 2008 (term to be determined) and that once these have been received the IDFG Director will make the final selections.

The group forwarded the following nominations:

- **West Central** – LWG group nominated Gene Gray
- **Owyhee** – LWG group will follow-up with nominations
- **Jarbidge** – Mike Remming is willing to continue, the group needs to meet again formally in order to nominate a representative. Trying to identify a facilitator for the group and hope to convene a meeting in February.
- **Shoshone Basin** – Rich Yankee willing to continue to serve. The group needs to meet again in order to nominate a representative. Their facilitator was reassigned and they need a new facilitator.
- **North Magic Valley** – nominations are John Peavey, Nathan Welch, Steve Beevers, and Tess O'Sullivan
- **South Magic Valley** – currently working as an interagency group hoping to launch public kick off soon.
- **Curlew** – nominations are Dallan Nalder and Joe Terry co-sharing the position, alternate – Dean Rose
- **East Idaho Uplands** – plan to meet on 1/17/08 hope to have nominations at that meeting
- **Big Desert** – trying to identify willing participants, will follow-up with nominations
- **Upper Snake** – nominations are Lynn Burtenshaw and alternate Richard Savage
- **Challis** – possible nomination identified but individual wants to attend one SAC meeting to see if they are willing to do it (won't be able to attend first meeting until June 2008), alternate is Vince Guyer
- **Mountain Home** – Tom will be working to launch a LWG in 2008 here

Meeting participants also talked a little about the agency and stakeholder representatives. Tom asked if there were nominations for those folks. Following is the result of that discussion:

- **Shoshone–Paiute Tribes** – Dan Gosset will continue to represent
- **Shoshone–Bannock Tribes** – Tom is working with Tribe to identify representative if possible
- **Idaho Cattle Association** – John Romero (through November and maybe beyond)
- **Idaho Conservation League** – Rich Howard (through May and possibly beyond)
- **Idaho Wildlife Federation** – Steve Goddard
- **Ada County Fish and Game League** – Steve Goddard (tentative)
- **General public** – Bill Platts
- **BLM** – Paul Makela
- **USFS** – Rob Mickelsen
- **IDL** – Angela Lafferty
- **ISDA** – Ron Kay

The technical advisors will continue as currently identified for the time being. Tom may request that the group revisit this issue if necessary in the future.

Meeting participants also suggested to Tom that invitations to identify a nomination for participation on the SAC should be sent to:

- Western Watersheds Project
- Idaho Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Idaho Association of Counties (Dallan Nalder is on their public lands committee and will talk personally with them)
- TNC

SAC Role and Activities: Reviewing and Renewing the SAC's Role and Focus

The group turned next to a discussion about reviewing and renewing the SAC's role and focus in 2008. Alison reviewed the SAC's recent history since 2005 including the development of the state plan, and resolution of a number of organizational and other issues identified during development of the state plan. The group reviewed the core purposes of the SAC including:

- Project solicitation
- Project review/prioritization
- Periodic updates to state plan
- Communication to from (liaison) with LWG and SAC
- Coordination and communication between LWGs, SAC, state and federal agencies and other states

The group also identified the following potential external issues as areas that may require SAC information sharing, attention, action, etc. in 2008:

- Upcoming status review as result of Judge Winmill's decision in WWP v. USFWS

- North American Sage-grouse Conservation Ecosystem Plan – national legislation – possible need for review and or endorsement by summer 2008
- Update of WAFWA conservation assessment
- Idaho Windfarm development proposals
- Rural development, planning and zoning, mitigation issues
- Fire – future fires, rehabilitation, prevention
- NEPA associated with various projects – need for review (i.e., need point person to track, report, coordinate)
- USGS Great Basin Integrated Research Project (look into presentation – Mike Pelland, Carol Schuler)
- BLM Restoration Program (look into presentation)
- PECE policy amendment
 - “Significant portion of the range” – note folks weren’t sure if these fell under the PECE policy category or not. Allows for possibility of listing on state basis or portion of range (analysis of threats in the area).
- Gas and oil extraction in neighboring states
- Increasing levels of animosity, polarization, “upsettness” related to sage-grouse issues
- Public apathy – lack of interest

Participants also identified the following list of potential issues/needs regarding internal SAC organization:

- Need a person who can represent SAC at various meetings, etc. (difficult with all volunteer group with lots of other commitments)
- Possible need to create subcommittees to track various external issues
- How do LWG “send up the flare” when they need help, decisions and/or specific other support from the SAC and/ or how do LWGs that don’t meet very often (e.g., only meet once or twice a year) coordinate with the SAC – or how does the SAC contact them about an important issue?
- Efforts to increase/maintain support for LWGs (funding etc.)
- Set up SAC Executive Committee

Other issues raised in the discussion:

- Recognize a significant accomplishment – within both the SAC and the LWGs agencies are working together better than before
- Develop and agree to realistic population objectives for existing/remaining habitat (i.e., baseline)
- One individual suggested that IDFG should consider having the LWG help to review and provide information to help set seasons (would mean that Tom H. needs to send background and support data in advance)

The group also spent some time talking about how to best help the state respond to the remand and upcoming status review of sage-grouse. Discussion topics included:

- LWG provide summary of all projects completed and conservation actions implemented in the last 5 years

- LWGs consider reviewing the implementation plans in the LWG plan and adding additional commitments where appropriate
- The SAC sets up a subcommittee to review and update Chapter 6 of the state plan (implementation)
- The full SAC works together to review and update Chapter 6
- Some participants expressed concerns about the value and utility of some of the mapping tools that Joe Hinson presented, while others wondered how quickly they could be provided to LWGs

Alison asked the group to develop a recommendation regarding how to move forward from the January meeting. Four options were delineated:

- Option 1 – SAC TAT work on Chapter 6 update/modifications and bring those to SAC or subcommittee for review in April
- Option 2 – SAC adjourn until April with current agreements and take no additional action
- Option 3 – SAC to meet again prior to scheduled April meeting
- Option 4 – Some subset of SAC or other works on stand alone implementation framework

After some discussion, SAC members agreed to adjourn until the April meeting without any additional action (other than those identified below in the next steps and assignments section).

Next Steps and Assignments

SAC members agreed to the following next steps and assignments (in order of due date):

- SAC TAT will develop additional project criteria for review/discussion at the next SAC meeting (Ann Moser lead). **Due by April 14, 2008.**
- SAC funding subcommittee will work with the OSC Administrator and IDFG Director to explore development of language (MOU or other?) to clarify the role of the SAC in the recommendation/approval of USFWS sage-grouse funding dispersed through OSC (John Romero lead). **Due by April 14, 2008.**
- SAC TAT and Tom and OSC – will coordinate to further explore viability, use, desired outcomes etc. related to distribution of mapping products demonstrated by Joe Hinson (e.g., vegetation cover, shrub density, ownership, fire history, known leks, telemetry data). They will present summary and recommendation to SAC at April meeting for further discussion. **Due by April 14, 2008.**
- SAC TAT will develop a standardized data/information request form to collect information about all projects/actions completed to benefit sage-grouse and their habitats in the last 5 years. This may be similar to the annual report information but will include a clearer definition of a “project” and to the extend possible will incorporate information gained at the February 11, 2008 eleven state discussion about regarding the upcoming status review and any other relevant guidance (Ann Moser lead). **Due by February 29, 2008.**
- SAC TAT will distribute a 5-year project/action information request to LWGs. Due by March 1.
- LWGs to return 5-year project/action information request to SAC TAT (Ann Moser lead). **Due by May 1, 2008.**

- SAC TAT to collect information generated as part of federal agency data call (BLM, USFS) and investigate (and if possible do it) sorting information by LWG planning area. Note suggestion to look at 2005 status review for suggestions on organizational structure/categories etc. **Date uncertain – depends on timing of federal data call.**

The SAC also agree to the following future meeting dates and key agenda items (not inclusive):

- April 11-12, 2008 - Location: Dubois
 - Dubois Grouse days
 - Update status review
 - SAT TAT presentation – see above items
- July 15-16, 2008 - Location: Boise
 - Project Review
- October 7-8, 2008 - Location: Twin Falls (tentative)
 - Field trip – possibly Murphy Complex rehabilitation
- January 13-14, 2009 - Location: Boise
 - 2009 Planning

Adjourn

Tom Hemker thanked everyone for his or her efforts and adjourned the meeting.